AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1.   (Currently amended) A method for enabling a guest user who is not a registered user of an instant messaging system to communicate by instant messaging with a registered user of the system, the method comprising:

  receiving an **initial** indication that the guest user desires to communicate with **a** **selected** ~~the~~ registered user by instant messaging, **wherein the initial indication** **specifically identifies the selected registered user with whom the guest user** **desires to communicate**;

  sending to a client computer system associated with the guest user browser-executable computer code comprising computer instructions for providing at least limited instant messaging functionality to the guest user at the client computer system, without requiring the guest user to download and install client side instant messaging application software and without requiring the guest user to register as a user of the instant messaging system; and

  facilitating an instant messaging session between the guest user and the **selected** registered user.

2.   (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein facilitating the instant messaging session comprises delivering instant messages from the guest user to the **selected** registered user.

3.   (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising providing an entry point configured to receive ~~an~~ **the initial** indication from the guest user that the guest user desires to communicate with the **selected** registered user by instant messaging.

4.   (Currently amended) The method of claim 3, wherein the entry point is provided in an electronic mail message sent by the **selected** registered user to the guest user.

5.　(Currently amended) The method of claim 3, wherein the entry point is provided in a web page associated with the **selected** registered user.

6.　(Currently amended) The method of claim 3, wherein the entry point is provided in an electronic document associated with the **selected** registered user.

7.　(Original) The method of claim 3, wherein the entry point is provided by computer code comprising code written in the HyperText Markup Language (HTML).

8.　(Currently amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising receiving an indication from the **selected** registered user that the **selected** registered user would like to incorporate into an electronic mail message to the guest user an entry point configured to receive an indication from the guest user that the guest user desires to communicate with the **selected** registered user by instant messaging.

9.　(Currently amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising receiving an indication from the **selected** registered user that the inviting user would like to incorporate into a web page associated with the **selected** registered user an entry point configured to receive an indication from the guest user that the guest user desires to communicate with the inviting user by instant messaging.

10.　(Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the computer code comprises a browser-executable instant messaging client

11.　(Original) The method of claim 10, wherein the browser-executable instant messaging client comprises computer instructions in the Dynamic HyperText Markup Language (DHTML).

12.　(Original) The method of claim 10, wherein the browser-executable instant messaging client comprises computer instructions in JavaScript.

13.   (Original) The method of claim 10, wherein the browser-executable instant messaging client comprises computer instructions in ActiveX.

14.   (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising assigning a temporary user identification to the guest user.

15.   (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein the temporary user identification is unique to the guest user during the period during which it is assigned to the guest user.

16.   (Currently amended) The method of claim 14, wherein the temporary user identification is at least temporarily deactivated upon termination of the instant messaging session between the guest user and the **selected** registered user.

17.   (Currently amended) The method of claim 14, wherein the temporary user identification is valid only for instant messaging with the **selected** registered user.

18.   (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein the number of temporary user identifications that may be assigned at any given time to the IP address associated with the client computer system is limited.

19.   (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising prompting the guest user to provide a display name by which the guest user may be identified to the **selected** registered user.

20.   (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the instant messaging system is associated with at least one other registration-based service in which some users may be registered with the other service but not the instant messaging system and in which the users of the other service sign in using a user name to access the other service, the method further comprising:

determining if the guest user is signed in as a user of the other service; and

if the user is signed in as a user of the other service, using the user name associated with the guest user with respect to the other service as a display name to identify the guest user to the **selected** registered user.

21.   (Original) The method of claim 20, wherein cookie information is used to determine if the guest user is signed in as a user of the other service.

22.   (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the computer code is configured to display an instant messaging window to the guest user.

23.   (Currently amended) The method of claim 22, wherein the instant messaging window comprises an area for displaying messages sent by either the guest user or the **selected** registered user.

24.   (Currently amended) The method of claim 22, wherein the instant messaging window comprises an area for entering the text of a message to be sent and displayed to the **selected** registered user essentially in real time.

25.   (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising advising the **selected** registered user that the guest user is not a registered user.

26.   (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the **selected** registered user is associated with a registered user client computer system on which client side instant messaging application software associated with the instant messaging system is installed and the method further comprises disabling, at least with respect to the guest user, at least one feature of the client side instant messaging application software installed on said registered user client computer system.

27.   (Currently amended) The method of claim 26, wherein ~~the disabled feature~~ **disabling, at least with respect to the guest user, at least one feature of the client side instant messaging application software on said registered user client computer system includes a**

disabling feature ~~is one~~ that would otherwise have allowed the **selected** registered user to add the temporary user identification assigned to the guest user to a list of users whose online presence is monitored by the client side instant messaging application software installed on said **registered user** ~~second~~ client computer system.

28.   (Original) The method of claim 26, wherein the disable feature is one that the computer code sent to the guest user's client computer system does not support.

29.   (Currently amended) A method for enabling an invited user who may not be a registered user of an instant messaging system having client side instant message application software associated with it to communicate by instant messaging with an inviting user who is a registered user of the system, the method comprising:

receiving an **initial** indication that the invited user desires to communicate with the

inviting user by instant messaging**, wherein the initial indication specifically identifies the inviting user with whom the guest user desires to communicate**;

sending to a client computer system associated with the invited user browser-executable

computer code comprising computer instructions for:

determining whether the client side instant messaging application software

associated with the instant messaging system is installed in the client

computer system; and

in the event it is determined that the client side instant messaging application

software associated with the instant messaging system is not installed in

the client computer system, providing at least limited instant messaging

functionality to the invited user at the client computer system, without

requiring the invited user to download and install the client side instant

messaging application software and without requiring the invited user to

register as a user of the instant messaging system; and

facilitating an instant messaging session between the invited user and the inviting user.

30.   (Original) The method of claim 29, further comprising:

in the event it is determined that the client side instant messaging application software associated with the instant messaging system is installed in the client computer system, activating and using the installed client side instant messaging application software to enable the invited user to communicate with the inviting user by instant messaging.

31.   (Original) The method of claim 29, wherein said computer instructions for determining whether the client side instant messaging application software associated with the instant messaging system is installed in the client computer system comprises computer code written in the JavaScript programming language.

32.   (Original) The method of claim 29, wherein said computer instructions for determining whether the client side instant messaging application software associated with the instant messaging system is installed in the client computer system comprises computer code written in the VBScript programming language.

33.   (Original) The method of claim 29, wherein said computer instructions for determining whether the client side instant messaging application software associated with the instant messaging system is installed in the client computer system comprises computer code written in the ActiveX programming language.

34.   (Currently amended) A system for enabling a guest user who is not a registered user of an instant messaging system to communicate by instant messaging with a registered user of the system, comprising:

a web server configured to:

receive an **initial** indication that the guest user desires to communicate with ~~the~~ **a selected** registered user by instant messaging**, wherein the initial indication specifically identifies the selected registered user with whom the guest user desires to communicate**; and

send to a client computer system associated with the guest user browser-executable computer code comprising computer instructions for

providing at least limited instant messaging functionality to the guest

user at the client computer system, without requiring the guest user to

download and install client side instant messaging application software

and without requiring the guest user to register as a user of the instant

messaging system; and

an instant messaging server configured to facilitate an instant messaging session

between the guest user and the **selected** registered user.

35.   (Original) The system of claim 34, wherein said web server comprises a plurality of servers.

36.   (Original) The system of claim 34, wherein said instant messaging server comprises as plurality of servers.

37.   (Currently amended) A computer program product embodied on a computer readable **storage** medium for enabling a guest user who is not a registered user of an instant messaging system to communicate by instant messaging with a registered user of the system, the computer program product comprising computer instructions for:

receiving an **initial** indication that the guest user desires to communicate with ~~the~~

selected registered user by instant messaging, **wherein the initial indication**

specifically identifies the selected registered user with whom the guest user

desires to communicate;

sending to a client computer system associated with the guest user browser-executable

computer code comprising computer instructions for providing at least limited

instant messaging functionality to the guest user at the client computer system,

without requiring the guest user to download and install client side instant

messaging application software and without requiring the guest user to register

as a user of the instant messaging system; and

facilitating an instant messaging session between the guest user and the **selected**

registered user.